

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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After Serious Accident, CDF to Remove Ten Fire Engines from Service

Sacramento- In the wake of Sunday's accident in which three firefighters from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) were critically injured, CDF management has withdrawn ten fire engines from service and has launched a mechanical investigation. These fire engines are part of a particular group of engines that were delivered to the Department within the past year. CDF Chief of Fire Protection, Jim Wright, has ordered the action in response to initial reports that the drive shaft may have malfunctioned.

Rich Just, CDF Assistant Director for Fire Protection will implement the recall. "This was a brand new engine. If it had some kind of mechanical failure, we need to know about it," Chief Just announced this morning. "We're taking immediate action to determine if we need to make any kind of adjustment to the other similar engines."

The firefighters, all from the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit of CDF, were injured when their engine careened over a freeway embankment and fell 60 feet to a ravine below. They were responding to a fire near Fontana in San Bernardino County. The accident occurred near the intersection of Highway 138 and Interstate 15 at approximately 6 p.m. Sunday August 11, 2002. All three firefighters were removed from the vehicle with the Jaws-Of-Life and flown to Loma Linda Hospital for treatment.

CDF assigned an investigation team to the accident that includes the Department's safety officer. The team is coordinating with the California Highway Patrol to determine the exact cause of the accident. The Department also flew the families of the firefighters to Southern California and assigned a liaison to see to their needs. "Step one; we take care of our firefighters and their families. Step two, we find out how this happened and do our best to see that it doesn't happen again," added Chief Just.

As of 9 a.m. Monday morning (8-12-02) the condition of the firefighters is as follows: Fire Apparatus Engineer Tim Valadez is listed in critical condition with extreme blood loss and broken bones. Firefighter Justin Andrews and Firefighter Wesley Grissel are in stable condition. Engine 4453 is from the West Point Fire Station in the CDF Tuloumne-Calaveras Unit.

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